THE BATTLE-CRY

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SYNOPSIS.

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Juanita Holland, a Philadelphia young woman of wealth, on her journey with her guide, Good Anse Talbott, into the heart of the Cumberlands to become a teacher of the mountain children, faints at the door of Fletch McNash's cabin. While resting there she overhears a talk between Bad Anse Havey, chief of his clan, and one of his henchmen that acquaints her with the Havey-McBriar feud. Juanita has an unprofitable talk with Bad Anse and they become antagonists. Cal Douglas of the Havey clan is on trial in Peril, for the murder of Noah Wyatt, a McBriar. In the night Juanita hears feudists ride past the McNash cabin. Juanita and Dawn McNash become friends. Cal Douglas is acquitted. Nash Wyatt attempts to kill him but is himself killed by the Haveys. Juanita goes to live with the Widow Everson, whose boys are outside the feud. Milt McBriar, head of his clan, meets Bad Anse there and disclaims responsibility for Wyatt's attempt to kill Douglas. They declare a truce, under pressure from Good Anse Talbott. Juanita thinks she finds that Bad Anse is opposing her efforts to buy land and build a school. Milt McBriar breaks the truce by having Fletch McNash murdered. Jeb McNash begs Bad Anse to tell him who killed his father, but is not told. Juanita and Bad Anse further misunderstand each other. Bad Anse is bitter, but tells Juanita he does not fight women and will give her land if necessary. Juanita gets her land and cabin. Old Bob McGreegor incites Jeb McNash to murder Young Milt McBriar, but Jeb refrains as he is not sure Young Milt is the murderer. Young Milt and Dawn meet several times, resulting in a demand from Bad Anse that Dawn leave Juanita's cabin. Juanita and Good Anse go to see Bad Anse, who again says that the school will fail because it has been started by Juanita in the wrong way. Juanita begins to understand Bad Anse's dream of regeneration for his people.

CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

Again Jeb's face had become ashen and his muscles were twitching. Anse laid a hand on his shoulder, but the boy jerked away and again confronted his elder, while his voice broke from his lips in an excess of passion. "Tell me his name. By God, he b'longs ter me!"

"No, I ain't goin' to tell ye his name just yet, Jeb," Anse calmly announced. "He ain't in these parts now. He's left the mountains, an' it wouldn't do ye much good to know his name—yet. Two days after he comes back I'll tell ye all ye wants to know, an' I won't try ter hinder ye, but ye must let the children stay over there at the school. Dawn's heart's set on it, an' it wouldn't be fair to break her heart."

The boy stood trembling in wrath and indecision. Finally his voice came dubiously. "Ye done give me yore hand once before thet es soon es ye knowed ye'd tell me—an' ye lied ter me."

Anse Havey shook his head with unruffled patience.

"No, I didn't lie to ye, son. I wasn't sure till after he left. I ain't never lied to no man."

A long silence fell on the room. Through the open window came the silvery call of a quail in some distant thicket. After a while the boy raised his head and nodded. "I'll give ye my hand," he said.

When he left the room Juanita rose from her chair.

"There is no way to thank you, Mr. Havey," she said with a touch of diffidence. "I don't believe that two wrongs ever made one right. I don't believe that you can win out to law by lawlessness. But I do believe you are sincere, and I know that you're a man."

"And, for my part," he answered slowly, "I think ye're just tryin' to grow an oak tree in a flower pot, an' it can't be done. I think that all ye can do is to breed discontent—an' in these hills discontent is dangerous. But I ain't hinderin' your school an' I don't 'low to. Ye'll find out for yourself that it's a failure an' quit at your own behest."

"I shan't quit," she assured him, but this time she smiled as she said it. "I am going ahead, and in the end I am going to undermine the regime of feud and illiteracy; that is, I and others like me. But can't we fight the thing out as if it were a clean game? Can't we be friendly adversaries? You've been very generous, and I've been a bigoted little fool, but can't you forgive me and be friends?"

He straightened and his face hardened again, and slowly he shook his head. His voice was very grave and uncompromising, though without discourtesy. "I'm afraid it's a little too late for that."

Juanita slowly drew back the hand she had extended and her cheeks flushed crimson. It was the first time in her life that she had made an unsolicited proffer of friendship—and it had been rebuffed.

"Oh!" she murmured in a dazed, hurt voice in which was no anger. Then she smiled. "Then there's nothing else to say, except to thank you a thousand times."

"Ye needn't have no uneasiness about my tryin' to hinder ye," he assured her slowly. "I ain't your enemy an' I ain't your friend. I'm just lookin' on, an' I don't have no faith in your success."

"Don't you feel that changes must come?" she questioned a little timidly. "They have come everywhere else."

"They will come." His voice again rose vehemently. "But they'll be made my way—our way, not yours. These hills sha'n't always be a reproach to the state of Kentucky. They're goin' to be her pride some day."

"That's all!" exclaimed the girl, flinging at him a glance of absolute admiration. "I don't care who does it, so long as it's done right. You've got to see sooner or later that we're working to the same end. You may not be my friend, but I'm going to be yours."

"I'm obleeged to ye." He spoke gravely and, turning on his heel left the room by the back door.

As chance would have it, Young Milt rode by her place the next day. She knew he would come back the same way, and that afternoon, as he was returning, she intercepted him beyond the turn of the road. With the foreign courtesy learned abroad, he lifted his hat and dismounted.

Juanita had always rather liked Young Milt. The clear fearlessness of his eyes gave him a certain attractiveness, and his face had so far escaped the clouding veil of sullenness which she so often saw.

At first she was a little confused as to how to approach the subject, and the boy rolled a cigarette as he stood respectfully waiting.

"Milt," she said at last, "please don't misunderstand me. It's not because I want to, but I've got to ask you to give me a promise. You see, I need your help."

At that the half smile left the boy's lips and a half frown came to his eyes.

"I reckon I know what ye mean," he said. "Young Jeb, he's asked ye ter warn me off. Why don't Jeb carry his own messages?"

"Milt," she gravely reminded him, resting her hand for a moment on his coatsleeve, "it's more serious than that. Jeb ordered me to send his sister back to the cabin. You are having an education. I want her to have one. She has the right to it. I love her very dearly, Milt, and if you are a friend you won't rob her of her chance."

The boy's eyes flashed.

"An' ye're goin' ter send her back thar ter dwell amongst them razorback hawgs an' houn'-dawgs an' fleas?" he demanded spiritedly.

"That depends on you. Jeb is the head of his family. I can't keep her without his consent. I had to promise him that you shouldn't visit her."

For a moment the heir to the McBriar leadership stood twisting the toe of his heavy boot in the dust and apparently contemplating the little rings it stamped out. Then he raised his eyes and contemplatively studied the crests of ridges softening with the coming of sunset.

At last he inquired, "What hes Dawn got ter say?"

"Dawn hasn't said much," Juanita faltered, remembering the girl's tirade, then she confessed: "You see, Milt,

"Tell Me His Name. By God, He Belongs to Me!"

just now Dawn is thinking of herself as a Havey and of you as a McBriar. All I ask is that you won't try to see her while she's here at the school—not, at all events, until things are different."

The boy was wrestling with youth's unwillingness to be coerced.

"An' let Dawn think that her brother skeered me off?" he questioned at last with a note of rising defiance.

"Dawn sha'n't think that. She shall know that you have acted with a gentleman's generosity, Milt—and because I've asked you to do it."

"Hain't I good enough ter keep company with Fletch McNash's gal?" The lad was already persuaded, but his stubbornness fired this parting shot.

"It's not a question of that, Milt, and you know it," declared Juanita. "It's just that one of your people killed one of his. Put yourself in Jeb's place."

Still for a while the boy stood there scowling down at the ground, but at last he raised his face and nodded.

"It's a bargain, ma'am, but mind I only says I won't see her hyar. Some day I'll make Jeb pay fer it."

He mounted and rode away while the lazy, hazy sweetness of the smoky mists hung splendidly to the ridges and the sunset flamed at his back.

Juanita never knew what details of the incident came to Old Milt's ears, but when next the head of the house passed her on the road he spoke with a diminished cordiality, and when she stopped him he commented: "I hear ye're a-runnin' a Havey school over thar now. Little Milt tells me ye warned him offen yore place."

She tried to explain, and though he pretended to accept all she said in good humor, she knew in her heart she had made a powerful and bitter enemy.

One afternoon Anse Havey, wandering through the timber on his own side of the ridge, came upon a lone hunter, and when he drew near it proved to be young Milt McBriar.

"Mornin', Milt," said Havey. "I didn't know ye ever went huntin' over here."

The boy, who in feud etiquette was a trespasser, met the scrutiny with a level glance.

"I was a-gunnin' for boomers," he said, using the local phrase for red squirrels of the hills. "I reckon I hain't hardly got no license ter go gunnin' on yore land."

Anse Havey sat down on a log and looked up at the boy steadily. At last he said gravely:

"Hunt as much as ye like, Milt, only be heedful not to start no fires."

Milt nodded and turned to go, but the older man called him back.

"I want to have a word with ye, Milt," he said soberly. "I ain't never heard that neither the McBriars nor the Haveys countenanced settin' fire to dwellin'-houses, have you?"

"I don't know what ye means," responded the boy, and the gaze that passed between them was that of two men who can look direct into any eye.

"I 'lowed it would astonish ye," went on Anse. "Back of the new schoolhouse that's still full of shavin's an' loose timber there's a little stretch of dry woods that comes right down to the back door. Somebody has done laid a trail of shavin's an' leaves in the brush there an' soaked 'em with coal-oil. Some feller aims to burn down that schoolhouse tonight."

"Did ye tell Miss Holland?" demanded Milt in a voice of deep anxiety.

"No, I ain't named it to her." Bad Anse said with seeming indifference in his face, at which the lad's blood boiled.

"Does ye aim ter set hyar an' let her place git burnt up?" he snapped out wrathfully. "Because if ye does, I don't."

Anse Havey laughed.

"Well, no," he replied; "I didn't aim to do that."

Suddenly he rose.

"What I did aim to do, Milt, was this: I aimed to go down there tonight with enough fellers to handle either the fire or whoever starts it. I aimed to see who was doin' a trick like that. Will you go with me?"

"Me?" echoed Milt in astonishment. This idea of the two factions acting in consort was a decided innovation. It might be a trap. Suddenly the boy demanded: "Why don't ye ask pap?"

"I don't ask your pap nothing." In Havey's reply was a quick and truculent snap that rarely came into his voice. "I'm askin' you, an' you can take my proposition or leave it. That house-burner is goin' to die. If he's one of my people I want to know it. If he's one of your people you ought to feel the same way. Will you go with me?"

The boy considered the proposal for a time in silence. Dawn would be in danger! At last he said gravely:

"Hit sounds like a fair proposition. I'll go along with ye, an' meantime I'll keep my own counsel."

CHAPTER XV.

Anse Havey had been looking ahead. When old Milt McBriar had said "Them Haveys 'lows thet I'd cross hell on a rotten plank ter do 'em injury" he had shot close to the mark. Bad Anse knew that the quiet-visaged old murder lord could no more free himself from guile and deceit than the rattler can separate itself from the poison which impregnates its fangs and nature.

When he had taken Milt's hand, sealing the truce, he had not been beguiled, but realized that the compact was only strategy and was totally insincere. Yet in Young Milt he saw possibilities. He was accustomed to rely on his own judgment, and he recognized a clean and sterling strain in the younger McBriar.

He hated the breed with a hatred that was flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, but with an eye of prophecy he foresaw the day when a disrupted mountain community must fall asunder unless native sons could unite against the conquest of lowland greed. He could never trust Old Milt, but he hoped that he and Young Milt, who would some day succeed to his father's authority, might stand together in that inevitable crisis.

This idea had for a long time been vaguely taking shape in his mind, and when he met Young Milt in the woods and proposed uniting to save Juanita's school he was laying the cornerstone for that future alliance.

At sunset Young Milt came, and he came without having spoken of his purpose at home. The night was sharp and moonless, with no light save that which came from the coldly glittering stars, and Anse and Young Milt crouched for hours, knee to knee in the dead thickets, keeping watch.

At last they both saw a creeping figure which was only a vague shadow moving among shadows, and they peered with straining eyes and raised rifles. But the shadow fell very still, and since it was only by its movement that they could detect it, they waited in vain.

What hint of being watched was given out no one could say. The woods were quiet, and the two kneeling figures in the laurel made no sound. The other men, waiting at their separated posts, were equally invisible and noiseless, but some intangible premonition had come to the shadow which had lost itself in the impenetrable blackness and began its retreat with its object unaccomplished.

Young Milt went back to his house in the cold mists of dawn. No shot had been fired, no face recognized, but the Havey and the McBriar both knew that the school had been saved by their joint vigilance.

Some days later the news of that night watch leaked through to Jerry Everson, who bore the tidings to Juanita, and she wrote a note to Anse Havey asking him to come over and let her express her thanks in person.

The mail rider brought her a brief reply penned in a hand of copybook care.

I don't take any credit. I only did what any other man would do, and young Milt McBriar did as much as I did. Thank him if you want to. It would only be awkward for me to come over there.

Respectfully, ANSE HAVEY.

Old Milt McBriar heard of his son's part in the watching of the school and brooded blackly as he gnawed at the stem of his pipe, but he said nothing. The boy had been sent away to college and had had every advantage. Now he had unwittingly but none the less surely, turned his rifle on one of his father's hirelings bent on his father's work, for the oil-soaked kindling had been laid at Old Milt's command.

The thing did not tend to make the leader of the McBriars partial to the innovations from down below.

One day, when Juanita went down to the post office, which nestled unobtrusively behind the single counter of the shack store at the gap, she found a letter directed in a hand which set her heart beating and revived many old memories.

She climbed to the crest, sat down under the poplar, and began to read the letter from the man she had sent away.

He said that he had made a sincere effort to reconcile himself to her decision which exiled him. The effort had failed. He had been to the Mediterranean and the East. His letter concluded:

Can you not find it in your heart to be touched by my devotion. Not only happiness, but peace dwells where you are, and I am coming to you.

Do not forbid me, for I am coming anyway. I am coming because I must; because I love you.

She sat for a long time gazing off at the distances and shivered a little in the bite of the raw air. Then she looked up and saw a figure at her side. It was Bad Anse Havey.

He bowed and stripped off his coat, which, without asking permission, he threw around her shivering shoulders.

"I didn't aim to intrude on ye," he said slowly. "I didn't know ye was up here. Do ye come often?"

"Very often," she answered, folding the letter and putting it back into its envelope. "When I first came to the Widow Everson's I discovered this tree, and it seemed to beckon to me to come up. Look!" She rose and pointed off with a gauntleted hand. "I can stand here and see the fortifications of my two enemies. There is your place and there is Milt McBriar's."

She smiled with unconscious archness. "But I'm not going to let you be my enemy any more," she went on. "I've decided that you have got to be my friend, whether you want to be or not—and what I decide upon must be."

Bad Anse Havey stood looking into her eyes with the disconcerting steadiness of gaze that she always found it difficult to sustain, but his only response was a sober "I'm obleeged to ye."

Perhaps that letter, with its old reminders had brought back a little of the old self's innocent coquetry. She stood with her gloved hands in the deep pockets of her sweater jacket with his coat hanging from her shoulders. About her deep-violet eyes and sensitive lips lurked a subtle appeal for friendship—perhaps, though she did not know it—for love.

"I have behaved abominably to you, Mr. Havey," she confessed. "It's natural that you should refuse me forgiveness." For a moment her eyes danced and she looked up, challengingly, into his face. "But it's natural, too, that I should refuse to let you refuse. We are going to be friends. I am going to smash your old feud to splinters and I'm going to beat you, and just the same we are going to be friends."

Again his reply was brief.

"I'm obleeged to ye."

"You have been very good to me," she went on, and the note of banter left her voice; "and you refused to let me thank you."

For a moment he was silent, then he replied awkwardly: "I reckon it's pretty easy to be good to you." After that she heard him saying in a very soft voice:

"One of the first things I remembers is being fotched up here by mammy when I was a spindlin' little chap. She used to bring me up here and tell me Indian stories. Sometimes my pappy came with us, but mostly it was just my mammy an' me."

"Your father was a soldier, wasn't he?" she asked.

"Yes. He was a captain in Morgan's command. When the war ended he come on back here an' relapsed. I reckon I'd oughter be right smart ashamed of that, but somehow I'm tol'able proud of it. He 'lowed that what was good enough for his folks was good enough for him—"

He broke off suddenly and a smile came to his face; a remarkably naive and winning smile, the girl thought. Striking an attitude, he added in a tone of mock seriousness and perfect lowland English, without a trace of dialect: "I beg your pardon, Miss Holland. I mean that what was sufficiently good for his environment appeared adequate to him."

The girl's laughter pealed out in the cool air, and she said with an afternote of surprise: "Why, Mr. Havey, you didn't speak like a mountain man then. I thought I was listening to a 'furriner.'"

He nodded his head and the smile died from his lips. Into his eyes came the look of steady resolve which was willing to fight for an idea.

"I just did that to show ye that I could. If I wanted to, I reckon I could talk as good English as you. I reckon ye won't hardly hear me do it no more."

"But why?" she inquired in perplexity.

"I reckon it sounds kinder rough an' ign'rant to ye, this mountain speech. Well, to me it's music. It's the language of my own people an' my own hills. I loves it. It don't make no diff'rence to me that it's bad grammar.

Young Milt Went Back to His House in the Cold Mists of Dawn.

Birds don't sing so sweet when ye teaches 'em new tunes. To my ears the talk of down below is hard an' unnatural. I don't like the ways nor the speech of the flat countries. I'll have none of it. Besides, I belongs here, an' if I didn't talk like they do my people wouldn't trust me." He paused a moment, then added: "I'd hate to have my people not trust me. So if ye don't mind, I reckon I'll go on talkin' as I learnt to talk."

She nodded her head. "I see," she said quietly.

"What do ye aim to call this school?" he asked suddenly.

"Why, I thought I'd call it the Holland school," she answered, and when he shook his head and said "Don't do it," she colored.

"I didn't mean to name it for myself, of course," she explained. "I wanted to call it after my grandfather. He always wanted to do something for education here in the Kentucky hills."

"I didn't mean to find no fault with the name of Holland," he told her gravely. "That's as good a name as any. But don't call it a school. Call it a college."

"But," she demurred, "it's not going to be a college. It's just a school."

Again the boyish smile came to his face and seemed to erase ten years from his age. His manner of speech made her feel that they were sharing a secret.

"That don't make any difference," he assured her. "Mountain folks are all mighty proud an' touchy. I shouldn't be astonished if some gray-haired folks came to study the primer. They'll come to college all right, but it wouldn't hardly be dignified to go to school. If you want to get 'em ye must needs call it a college."

The girl looked at him again and said in a soft voice: "You are always teaching me things I ought to know. Thank you."

Juanita stood as he left her and watched him striding down the slope. On his part he went back to his house and found it suddenly dark and cheerless and unsatisfying.

Into the soul of Bad Anse Havey had come a new element, and the prophet which was in him could see a new menace; a necessity for curbing the grip of this new dream which might easily outgrow all his other dreams and bring torture to his heart. Here was a woman of fine fiber and delicate culture in whose eyes he might at best be an interesting barbarian. Between them lay all the impassable barriers that quarantined the tangled coves of the mountains from the valleys of the rich lowlands. Between their lives and viewpoints lay the same irreconcilable differences.

And yet her image was haunting him as he went his way, and in his heart was awakening an ache and a rapture.

On several of her buildings now the hammers were busy shingling the roofs. Her influence grew and spread among the simple folk to whom she was unostentatiously ministering—an influence with which the old order must some day reckon.

Anse Havey set his face against crossing her threshold with much the same resolution that Ulysses stuffed his ears against the siren song—and yet with remarkable frequency the climbed at the same time from opposite directions and met by the poplar tree on the ridge.

"It's the wrong notion," he told her obstinately, when her enthusiasm broke from her. "It's teachin' things that's goin' ter make the children ashamed of their cabins an' their folks. It's goin' ter make 'em want things ye can't hardly give 'em.

"Go to any cabin in these hills an' ye'll find the pinch of poverty, but ye won't find shame for that poverty in none of 'em. We ain't got so many virtues here maybe, but we've got a few. We can wear our privations like a uniform that we ain't ashamed of—yes, an' make a kind of virtue out of it."

"I'm not out of sympathy with that," she argued; "I think it's splendid."

"All right," he answered; "but after ye've taught 'em a few things they won't think it's splendid. Ye'll breed discontent an' then ye'll go away, an' all ye'll have done will be to have knocked their one simple virtue down 'round their ears."

"How many times do I have to tell you I'm not going away?" demanded the girl hotly. "Just watch me."

Again he shook his head, and into his eyes came a look of sudden pain. "I reckon ye'll go," he said. "All good things go. The birds quit when winter comes an' the flowers go."

So, in an impersonal way, they kept up their semblance of a duel and mocked each other.

CHAPTER XVI.

In an office which overlooks the gray stone courthouse in Louisville sat a youngish man of somewhat engaging countenance. In the small anteroom of his sanctum was a young woman who hammered industriously on a typewriter and told most of the visitors who called that Mr. Trevor was out. That was because most of those who came bore about them the unmistakable hall-mark of creditors. Mr. Trevor's list of creditors would have made as long a scroll as his list of business activities.

Yet for all these cares Mr. Trevor was just now sitting with his tan shoes propped on his broad desk, and his face was untroubled. He was one of these interesting gentlemen who give a touch of color to the monotony of humdrum life. Mr. Trevor was a soldier of fortune who sold not his sword, but the very keen and flexible blade of his resourceful brain.

Roger Malcolm of Philadelphia knew him only as the pleasant chance acquaintance of an evening spent in a New York club.

He had impressed the Easterner as a most fascinating fellow who seemed to have engaged in large enterprises here and there over the face of the globe. So when Mr. Malcolm presented his card in the office anteroom the young woman at the machine gave him one favoring glance and did not say Mr. Trevor was out.

"So you are going to penetrate the wilds of the Cumberlands, are you?" inquired Mr. Trevor in his pleasing voice, as he grasped his visitor's hand. "Tell me just where you mean to go and I'll tell you how to do it with the least difficulty. The least difficult down there is plenty."

"My objective," replied Mr. Malcolm, "is a place at the headwaters of a creek called Tribulation, some thirty miles from a town called Peril."

"I know the places—and their names fit them. I'd offer to go with you, but I'm afraid I wouldn't prove a benefit to you. I'm non grata with Bad Anse Havey, Esquire, and Mr. Milton McBriar, who are the local dictators."

Mr. Malcolm laughed.

"In passing," he said, "I dropped in to talk over the coal development proposition which you said would interest me."

Mr. Trevor reached into his desk and brought out several maps.

"The tentacles of the railroads are reaching in here and there," he began with the promoter's suave ease of manner. "It is a region which enterprise can no longer afford to neglect, and the best yield of all is as yet virgin and untouched."

"Why did you drop the enterprise yourself?" inquired his visitor.

"I did not have the capital to swing it. Of course, if it interests you and your associates it can be put through."

Malcolm nodded. "I am going primarily by way of making a visit," he said. "I meant to go before you roused my interest in your proposition, and it occurred to me that I might combine business with pleasure."

The promoter looked up with a shade of surprise.

"You have friends out there in that God-forsaken tangle?" he inquired. "God help them!"

"A lady whom I have known for a long while is establishing a school there."

With the mention of the lady Malcolm's voice took on an uncommunicative note, and Mr. Trevor at once changed the topic to coal and timber.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Solomon as Naturalist.

There is an odd reluctance upon the part of many people to go to the ant, the water-bug, the beetle and other "invertebrate" or backboneless creatures, to consider their ways and be wise. Solomon was a learned naturalist of his day and perhaps the first animal behaviorist of all time.

Not alone ants and bees taught him much, but all insects, beasts of the field and birds of the air contributed to his wisdom. If Solomon were alive today, he would more than glory in the domain of experimental research into the behavior of the lower creatures. He would no doubt write a down-to-date volume of proverbs founded upon the learning abilities, the memory and the behavior in general of fleas, lice, flies, gnats and other insects.